

VZCZCXRO1956  
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEH KI #0596 2030557  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 210557Z JUL 08  
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8209  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000596

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KENV](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: TWO KILLED IN ATTACK ON WWF VEHICLE IN VIRUNGA PARK

¶1. (U) The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) confirmed through a press release July 9 that two people were killed and three injured in an attack on a WWF vehicle in Virunga National Park, around 150 km north of Goma (Note: No U.S. citizens were involved. End note) The vehicle, a Toyota pickup truck, was transporting a team of 11 people, including WWF staff members, GDRC park rangers, and family members. A WWF staff member was among the wounded along with a ranger and the wife of another ranger; killed were the wife of a park ranger and her daughter.

¶2. (U) WWF Goma director Thierry Bodson was quoted in press reporting as stating that 15 gunmen attacked the vehicle looking for money and valuables. They reportedly made off with GPS trackers and cell phones.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: There was general speculation in the press that PARECO was responsible for the attack, but this has not been confirmed. Congolese park rangers wear military-style uniforms and are authorized to carry firearms; Bodson confirmed to a USAID officer that the park rangers on the truck were armed and were clearly visible in the bed of the truck. Bodson also noted that just prior to this incident, two other vehicles were attacked. He attributed these incidents to general banditry.

¶4. (SBU) Comment continued: Another theory for the attack, according to the DRC Director for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), is pre-existing antagonism between the park rangers, who work for the DRC Ministry of Environment's National Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN), and armed groups in the area. The validity of this theory is unclear, but it is known, for instance, that some "dissident" ICCN rangers joined earlier this year with CNDP forces in control of the Mikeno Sector of Virunga Park and were reportedly conducting guided tours of the mountain gorilla habitat located there. OCHA continues to investigate the circumstances and reasons for the attack. End comment.

GARVELINK